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A CONVERSATION

BETWEEN

A COUNTRY PARSON AND ONE OF HIS FLOCK.

UPON THE SUBJECT OF

The Church Society.

BY

THE REV. W. STEWART DARLING.

Incumbent of Christ's Church, with St. Paul's, Scarborough.

Feeling a deep interest, in common with the great bulk of the clergy, in the prosperity of The Church Society of the Diocese of Toronto, and being sensible that the future welfare and extension of the Church was, under God, mainly dependant on the hearty support and general co-operation afforded to it by the churchmen of the diocese, I had been endeavouring to secure a general attendance of the parishioners at the annual public meeting of our Parochial Association; which was to be held shortly in our little country church. Having called upon many of my parishioners, and obtained their promises of attendance, I had turned my horse's head homewards and was riding slowly along, enjoying

the calm beauty of an autumnal evening. I had one more visit to pay, which I had deferred till the last in order to increase the probability of finding the good man of the house at home. He was an intelligent farmer, and a very worthy man, who had recently come to our parish, and who was in a great degree ignorant of the nature of the Society. I felt convinced, however, that if I could succeed in enlisting his understanding and his sympathies on behalf of the object I had in view, I should not only be sure of his attendance but of his support. My hopes of finding him at home were not disappointed, and after the usual salutations had been exchanged in a friendly and cordial manner, a conversation similar in substance to that which follows ensued between us.

Parson.—I called this evening, Mr. Heyric, to ask you to attend our Church Society meeting, which is to be held up at the church next week. I want you all to come, for we ought all to be interested in the object of that meeting. The Church Society will never thrive till all the members of each congregation, young and old, rich and poor, enrol themselves as members of the Parochial Association.

Parishioner.—I am very glad you have called, sir, for I wanted very much to ask you about this Church Society; for to say the truth, though I've heard something about it, I don't half understand it.

Par.—Did you not receive one of the annual reports of the Society's proceedings, which I circulated through the parish? In the commencement of it there is the constitution of the Society, together with the rules and laws by which it is conducted; have you not read that report?

Parish.—Indeed I have, sir, and there's a deal of interesting in it, and I see by it that there is both money and land given for good uses all over the country; but for all that there is a good deal about it

I don't rightly understand, and if you are not in a great hurry, I wish you would explain it to us.
 Par.—Why, the readiest way of explaining its objects is to refer you again to the constitution, contained in the beginning of the general report; and as I have one in my pocket, we will go through it together. First, then, you see it is a Missionary Society, established for the support of clergymen of the Church within this diocese—for assisting poor ministers by increasing their stipends—for providing some support for them when worn out by age, exertion and infirmities, and unfit for work, as well as for their widows and orphans after they themselves are removed by death. That is the first class of objects the Church Society has in view, and I am sure no one can deny their excellence.

Parish.—No, sir, that they can't, and I am sure a man must know little about the country not to know that missionaries are badly wanted in all parts of it. There are, as I hear, whole districts with only one or two clergymen in them, and we can all name over so many townships about us where the people never see the face of a minister of the Church, unless you or some other of the clergy about go out to baptize their children now and then. I am glad, too, that something is going to be done for those missionaries who are old and worn out, and for their families after they are gone; for the clergy are too poor in this country to lay up for a rainy day, as the saying is, either for themselves or their families.

Par.—Next you see the Church Society, as the constitution shows, is a Society for promoting education, by assisting in the support of Day schools and Sunday schools conducted according to the principles of the Church.

Parish.—That's good,—that's good. I wish we had a day school like that here. Before we had the

opportunity of sending our boys to the Sunday school. I sent word up to the schoolmaster we had in the part of the country where we were, that I wanted my boys taught their catechism, and he sent word back again that he would not do it, for it was against the act, and that therefore I might teach them myself. I want my boys to be good scholars, but I want them to be good christians too; and they should be taught their duty at school as well as at church.

Par.—The next object to which the Church Society desires to direct its efforts is, to grant assistance to deserving young men, who, in consequence of want of means, are incapable of pursuing those studies which are needful to fit them for the ministry.

Parish.—Well now I call that an excellent thing, and I wish there had been something of that sort long ago, for it puts me in mind of Tom Martin's boy. Tom lived in the settlement I came from, sir; he had a small farm, and had been in a better way of life and was much thought of by all the neighbours; he had a deal of learning for a man like him, and he was a sharp fellow too; but young Tom was a deal sharper than his father, and a wonderful scholar the boy was considering all the schooling he ever got. Tom Martin himself was a stiff churchman, and young Tom was a chip of the old block in that way, and a better christian than that lad I believe never walked the road. I often and often thought what a minister he would have made if he had had but the learning; but that, sir, you know he could not get, and so he had to work away on the farm with his father, and so he always did till I lost sight of them.

Par.—Indeed I doubt not there are numberless instances, where many respectable and excellent young men are lost to the ministry, for no other reason than their poverty. We must go on, however. You see by the fourth class of objects which is mentioned by the

constitution, that our Church Society is a Bible, Prayer Book, and Tract Society. Now I am sure there is no christian man but must allow the great importance of circulating the Holy Scriptures; and no member of the Church but must be sensible how great an object it is to send abroad through the diocese the Prayer Book and such other books and tracts as are calculated to spread the knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, according to those views which are held and taught by our own branch of the Catholic Church.

Parish.—No one can deny that, I am sure; and speaking of books and tracts, I see in the report something about their being "circulated through the medium of the Depository;" now I don't understand what this "Depository" is.

Par.—It is a book-store in King Street, Toronto; which has been set up by the Church Society, for the purpose of furnishing, at the lowest possible price, Bibles, Testaments, Prayer Books, and other books and tracts setting forth the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England. You can get a good Bible there for 1s. 3d., a Testament for 7½d., a Prayer Book for 10½d., and other books remarkably cheap. In the same building as the Depository, though not connected with it, is the printing office of *The Church* newspaper, an excellent journal for churchpeople, especially in the country, for it not only affords them religious instruction, and all information connected with the Church, but it also gives them all the interesting news of the day. Besides this Depository for the sale of books, there are other branch Depositories, established for the same purpose, in several parts of the country; and the Society is now encouraging the establishment of a small Depository in each district of the Province.

Parish.—Why, what a pity it is that this is not more known amongst the people. It is not very long

since I paid double the price you mentioned for some Prayer-Books for my boys.

Par.—The last object which the Church Society has in view is to assist in the building, keeping up, and endowing of churches and parsonages, and the setting apart of church-yards and burial-grounds.

Parish.—All very good, I'm sure. Indeed it is hard to say which is the best or the most important amongst the objects which you have mentioned; but where does the Society get the money to do all this, it must take a large sum?

Par.—It would indeed take a large sum to carry out fully all the objects which the Society has in view; and we cannot hope to do it for years to come. The Society has only been in existence five years, and though the success which has already attended its efforts is considerable, yet it is still, comparatively speaking, with it the day of small things. The only source to which it can look for the funds necessary to carry out its holy objects is, *the free-will offerings of the members of the Church*; and to obtain and gather these together, and devote them to the objects I have named, is the purpose for which the Church Society was formed.

Parish.—But why should a Society of this kind for the support of the clergy be formed at all? The government pays the greatest part of all your stipends, does it not, sir?

Par.—Most certainly not. That is an idea which seems to be ingrained into the minds of the people, and a most difficult thing it is to banish it. The government affords no more countenance to the Church in this Colony, than it does to any of the dissenting religious denominations; and I don't know a single clergyman in the diocese supported by the government, unless perhaps a few who receive an allowance for the duties they do as Military Chaplains. When a regi-

ment is stationed near a clergyman, he is called upon to give them service, to visit the sick in the hospital and so forth, and for this he is paid by an allowance from the military chest.

Parish.—Well! I am surprised at what you say. I know that you, sir, are not supported by your congregation, further than by the small sum arising from the pew rents; and I always fancied that you drew the rest of your stipend from government.

Par.—Not at all. I have nothing to do with the Government, and am neither appointed nor paid by them. I, and the great bulk of the clergy in the Diocese, are supported by the unfailing bounty of one of the great Missionary Societies of the Church of England—the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which (with the other great Society in England, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) has cherished the Church in these Colonies from the very beginning. There is scarcely a single parish in the whole Diocese which has not experienced the liberality of these Societies, and many are in the same position as our own parish—that is, the clergyman is supported by one Society, and great assistance is given by the other, and sometimes by both in building the churches, furnishing them with books for service, libraries and Sunday-schools.

Parish.—It's a great pity all this is not better known among the country folks; for this I'm sure of, that scarce one in a hundred knows the rights of the case, why they say that you all draw great salaries from the public money, and I don't know what else. I am sure we Church people ought to be greatly beholden to the Societies in England which you have mentioned, though I, for one, knew very little about them or what they were doing for us, until now. But surely these Societies, if they knew how badly the people in the back settlements were off, would not refuse to help them.

Par.—They are well aware of the spiritual destitution which exists, for our Bishop is in continual communication with them; but though they are very willing (as their deeds show) to supply our wants as far as they are able, yet there are many reasons which prevent them from assisting us to a greater extent than they already do.

Parish.—What are those reasons?

Par.—The first is, that a large share of their funds comes from the free-will offerings of people who are really much poorer than ourselves. I have heard it stated that one of the Missionary Societies in England receives £15,000 a-year, from the penny-a-week subscriptions of the labouring poor. Now, there is no comparison between the wealth of an English labourer and that of the bulk of the people in this colony.—We are far more able to help ourselves than they are to help us: and I suppose you will admit it to be unreasonable that the poor should help those who are comparatively rich.

Parish.—There is no disputing that, Sir, it's true; but then if we are better able to help some of the people at home, than they are to help us, still, there are thousands of rich people there who could do a deal for us without feeling it.

Par.—Very true: but if those rich people of whom you speak, see that though we could do a great deal for ourselves, we put our hands behind us and wait for them to do everything, do you think that a likely way to secure their sympathy or assistance?

Parish.—Why, no.—We don't deserve that they should lend us a helping hand, if we don't put our own shoulder to the wheel.

Par.—Exactly, Mr. Heyric; and it is in order to enable us to put our shoulder to the wheel with effect that the Church Society was formed. However, besides those which I have mentioned, there is another still more sufficient reason for their not rendering

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more assistance than they do already, and that is,—that, though willing to do so, they are not able. It is not very long since there were only six bishops in all the colonies of Great Britain, and now, as you would see by the interesting and very valuable list of Dioceses of the Reformed branches of the Catholic Church, at page 88 in the Appendix to the Annual Report of the Church Society, there are twenty-one: and in the course of another year or so there will probably be upwards of twenty-five. Now, for the support of the Church and Clergy in these Dioceses, the Societies in England are to a greater or less extent looked to, and if their income was double what it is, they could not answer so many demands made upon them from every quarter of the globe. They therefore expect (and expect justly) that we should be up and stirring on our own behalf; for we should be preparing ourselves for that day, which cannot be far distant, when they will withdraw, at all events from the older settlements, that assistance which they at present render. You see, therefore, that neither from the Government nor from the Missionary Societies of the Church in England, can we look for much further aid in supplying the spiritual wants of this Diocese.

Parish.—That's as plain as a pike-staff, as the saying is. But then, there are the Clergy Reserves.—What is become of them? can we get nothing from that quarter?

Par.—It is useless to build our hopes upon the Clergy Reserves. A large portion of the most valuable of them have been sold, as you know, and the share of the funds arising from the sale which has been given to the Church, is far too small to meet even her present wants. As for those which remain unsold we have twice petitioned the Government, that instead of selling the land, they would give us the small share (little more than one-quarter of the whole) which

may belong to us *in land*, and let us manage it the best way we could. This, however, they have refused to do; and the mode in which much of it is being disposed of, is such as to leave little hope of its proving of much service towards the extension of the Church.

Parish.—It does seem a hard case, that after taking away almost three-fourths of the most valuable of the Church's property, that the Government should refuse to let her have the management of the remaining quarter. It seems a strange way for the Church to be treated by the State.

Par.—It does indeed: however, we have nothing to do but to submit. They know that with us it is a religious principle, continually inculcated upon us by the Church, to obey the powers that be, even to our own deep disadvantage. The proper way for Churchmen to do now, is to act, with reference to the support and extension of the Church, as if there was no such thing as a Clergy Reserve in existence. It must now be evident to you, that we must depend neither upon the Government, the Missionary Societies of the Church in England, nor the Clergy Reserve Fund, to supply the spiritual destitution of this Diocese.

Parish.—It's a plain case, Sir. There are no two ways about the fact, that whatever is done for the Church now, must be done by the Church folks themselves; but it will be hard to convince a deal of the folks of the truth of this. They have been so used at home to have all the blessings of the Church provided for them without cost, that it won't be easy to persuade them that here, *if they want them*, they must pay for them.

Par.—Still we must endeavour to convince them of that truth; for never, till the people understand the true position in which the Church stands, will they give that general and hearty support to the Church Society which is necessary to its success.

And this I am sure of, that if intelligent laymen would make themselves acquainted with these things, and with the nature and objects of the Church Society, they could most materially assist the clergy in overcoming the ignorance and prejudices of the people on these subjects.

Parish.—Very true, Sir; and that reminds me that though you have explained to me the objects which the Society wishes to carry out, and have convinced me that it is high time for us to exert ourselves in its behalf, yet I must ask a few more questions about it, for I should like to understand the management or working of it. Who are to become members of the Society?

Par.—EVERY PERSON belonging to our communion. The Society is so formed as to be capable of embracing every baptized member of the Church, whether they are young or old, rich or poor, male or female, and we must never rest satisfied till the members of the Church, and the members of the Society are alike in number.

Parish.—But how is this to be managed? How shall we gather together the offerings of a people so widely scattered as the members of our Church?

Par.—This may be managed without much difficulty in those parishes or townships where there is a clergyman residing or statedly visiting; for, by the Constitution of the Society, every Parson with his Churchwardens, and such of the parishioners as may be appointed, form what is called "a Parochial Association or Committee of the Church Society." The duty of this committee is to call upon every member of the Church within the parish, and invite them to join the Society—and any sum which they may give, however small, makes them members of the "Parochial Association."

Parish.—That seems a very good plan. But after the money has been gathered together in this way, how is it disposed of?

Par.—The Parson of the parish, or the parochial Treasurer, if one be appointed, receives it, and if the township where it was collected is situated in the Home or Simcoe District, he sends it direct to the Treasurer of the Parent Society in Toronto, or if it is in any other District, he sends it to the Treasurer of the "District Branch of the Church Society," that is the person appointed in each District to receive all the funds received within its bounds for the purpose of the Church Society.

Parish.—And who is it, Sir, that conducts the business of the Society, and determines the way in which these funds shall be expended?

Par.—The Bishop of Toronto is President of the Society. Everything is considered and discussed at the meetings of the Society, held on the first Wednesday in every month, at which meetings every incorporated member, and there can never be less than one hundred, and there may be three hundred or even more, is at liberty to attend, and express his opinions, or suggest what he thinks may be of advantage. At these meetings there must be at least six incorporated members present, and nothing can be done without the sanction and approval of the Bishop. When any very important measure is to be considered, a month's notice, or sometimes two months' notice is given of it in *The Church* newspaper; so that persons in all parts of the Diocese may be aware of what is going forward, and may have an opportunity of attending and stating their views. Besides this, a report of the proceedings of every Monthly Meeting—of all the business transacted, and all moneys received and expended, is regularly published each month in *The Church*; so that every member of the Society may, if he pleases, be perfectly aware of all its proceedings.

Parish.—I see, Sir, that there is a Standing Committee. I always thought that these sort of Societies were managed by a Committee.

Par.—The Standing Committee do not manage the business of the Society; their duty is simply to prepare matters for its consideration: and the practice of the Society is to refer all applications for grants of money to this Committee, for it to report upon. The Standing Committee also examines all the accounts before they are submitted to the Society for payment.

Parish.—I am sure we could not trust what we have to give in better hands. If there is so much consideration used in expending it, we may be sure it will be laid out to the best advantage.

Par.—We have every reason to expect so: and the Society is most jealously careful that all its doings, and particularly all its money matters, should be open to the world.

Parish.—But, Sir, some of the townships may be so badly off themselves, for means to build or finish their own churches, that I'm afraid they won't like to send much money out of their own neighbourhood.—The Church Society won't get much in such places.

Par.—By subscribing to the Church Society such parishes not only do good to others, but they benefit themselves. The people would not, as a general rule, give the money which they subscribe to the Church Society to any other charitable object; they would not think it worth while to give a quarter, or half, or even a whole dollar towards building or finishing a church, but they would often give such a small sum to the Society. Well, these small sums, when collected from many persons, come to something; and when it is gathered together, and sent to the Treasurer, they have the power of calling back three fourths of the sum, to be expended in their own parish: they may spend it upon their church, or their Sunday-school, or

any such purpose they please, as long as it is included in the objects of the Church Society.

Parish.—He was a wise man that framed that plan, that's a sure case. When the folks understand that it is to do good to themselves as well as to others, they won't be backward in subscribing: I see plainly that this Church Society is a fine thing.

Par.—No doubt of it, Mr. Heyric: it is from the funds of our Parochial Association that our Sunday-school has been supported, prizes bought, our church insured, and our library increased. The three-fourths of whatever we raise is always at our command, if we require it; so that, in fact, it is only one-fourth that goes away from the parish, and is applied to the general purposes of this Society.

Parish.—The only thing, Sir, that I am afraid of is, that if it does so much good to ourselves, it will not be of much use to others; one-fourth of the funds received is a small portion to support travelling Missionaries, and the Widows and Orphans of the clergy, and those of the clergy themselves who are worn out in the service, besides the other objects you mentioned.

Par.—That is a very just remark, and if all looked upon it in the same light, it would render them more willing than they often are to fall in with the other means which the Society takes for increasing the funds for carrying out its general objects. It is one of the laws of the Society that in every church in the Diocese there shall be four collections made every year, and out of the proceeds of these collections the congregations which make them have no control: two of these collections go towards the support of travelling Missionaries, one towards the fund for sustaining the Widows and Orphans of the clergy, and the fourth is applied to such other object embodied within its Constitution, as the Society may from time to time direct.

Parish.—All I can say is, that in my poor judgment there never was framed a wiser or more admirable institution of its kind; and you may count on me, Sir, and all my family, doing everything in our power to forward it. You said, I think, just now, that the Society has been in existence for five years: what support has it met with, and what has it effected during that time?

Par.—The degree of success which has attended its efforts is of the most encouraging nature. Being an incorporated Society, it is consequently capable of holding real estate; and donations in land to the extent, I believe, of about 10,000 acres, have been made by private individuals. It now also supports ten Missionaries, and has sent abroad, through the length and breadth of the Diocese about 3,000 Bibles; 3,400 New Testaments; upwards of 8,000 Prayer-Books; and more than 101,000 books and tracts, all containing useful information and sound religious instruction. It numbers now nearly 3,000 subscribers, and its income, during the past year, amounted to £2,777; the mode of expending which is shown by the Report.

Parish.—Instead of calling it the day of small things, we might almost call it the day of great things; if we did not see when we look upon the province at large, that, all this when compared with our need, is but a drop in the bucket. Still even now the society must be doing great good, and every one ought to feel it a privilege to help on the good work, by joining it immediately.

Par.—Yes, Mr. Heyric, that is what we require, we want Every one to join it, we have now not quite 3,000 subscribers, but the returns in the Report show that the average amount of our congregations in this Diocese, amount altogether to upwards of 32,000; now, if we have done what we have, with 3,000 subscribers, what might we not hope to effect if we had

what we might soon have, viz., 30,000? Earnestly
 urge every sincere Churchman to strive and pray for
 the extension and prosperity of the Church Society.

Parish.—Indeed we ought all to do so, sir, and, as
 I said before, you may count upon us giving to it, and
 doing for it all in our power.

Par.—I was sure I would gain your support for it,
 as soon as you thoroughly understood its nature and
 objects, they are such as must commend themselves to
 our hearts. By the bye, I see your man Roger there
 coming in from the plough with his team, I must go
 and talk to him about this matter. Good evening,
 Roger, you attended our Church Society Meeting last
 year, and must remember the explanation which was
 then given of it. You did not become a member of
 the Society then, but I must have your name now.

Roger.—Why sir, I'm but a labouring man, and
 you don't expect anything from me, surely.

Par.—St. Paul expected men in your situation
 to be charitable, for he says that if we have no other
 means of relieving the wants of others, we are to la-
 bour, working with our hands the thing that is good,
 in order that we may have to give to him that needeth.

Roger.—All I could give, sir, would not be worth
 having.

Par.—I don't know that, your wages are ten
 dollars a month, and if you had lived in the times of
 the Old Testament, you would at the very least have
 had to give to God's service twelve dollars a year.
 We'll take three pounds a year from you, Roger, for
 the Church Society.

Roger.—Why, sir, would you ruin me out-right, I
 wouldn't mind giving a trifle, but twelve dollars a
 year!

Par.—Well, Roger, if you won't give what you
 ought, we'll even take a trifle for so good a cause.

But Bishop showed some time ago, that if every man
 please

of the Church in this Diocese were to give a penny a week, we should have an income for the Church Society of upwards of £20,000 a year, and that would do a good deal towards supplying the present wants of all the settled parts of the country.

Roger.—Well, sir, I wouldn't mind giving that much, a penny a week would not break me.

Par.—Would it not? let me see. You get ten dollars a month, that is one hundred and fifty pence a week, and so you will really give one penny out of the hundred and fifty which you make—you will honour God who gives you all your blessings with the one hundred and fiftieth part of your inheritance, you're a liberal man, Roger, very.

Roger.—Well, sir, it don't seem a great deal, and that's the truth on't, but it will come to summat in a year.

Par.—Yes—to four shillings and two pence out of the six hundred shillings you will gain in the course of the year, if God should spare you and give you strength for work; it's a great acknowledgment, is it not, for so great a mercy,—four shillings and two pence—?

Roger.—Well, we wout say any more about it, sir, but I'll be a dollar this year, and perhaps wa may do more next.

Par.—Many persons in your circumstances, Roger, would not have acted as well as you have done, and I put the matter in the way I did, not from any unkindness, but merely to try and show you what miserable niggardliness passes now a-days under the name of liberality. It will, I daressy, be considered a miracle of generosity in the parish, for a labouring man at ten dollars a month, to give a dollar a year to the Church Society.

Parish.—There's a deal of truth in what you say, sir, but till men feel they are debtors to God for every blessing which makes them happy and comfortable,

and for the strength which, as the Bible says, enables them to get wealth, they will never give with an open hand.

Par.—Very true, and when, in addition to that, they become sensible of the unspeakable value of the spiritual mercies which God has conferred upon them, when they feel their own unworthiness and weakness, and remember that it was to deliver beings so lost and helpless from the just desert of their sins, that God's well-beloved and Co-Eternal Son suffered and died, then will they be sensible that all they can possibly give to the furtherance of His cause would be an offering too poor to present in acknowledgment of mercy so unspeakable. When we duly value God's "inestimable love in the Redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ," the thought that He will accept a portion of that worldly wealth which he himself bestowed upon us, as a token of our gratitude, will lead us to offer it, not only with willingness, but with a feeling of thankfulness that He should condescend to point out a way in which we may do something to mark our sense of all that we owe to Him.

Par.—Yes, sir, and besides that, when we are blessed with "the means of Grace," and by a proper use of them may enjoy "the hope of Glory,"—surely we must have hard hearts not to do something to extend them to others, more especially when we remember that we are blessed with them through the bounty and benevolence of our fellow Churchmen in England.

Par.—It gratifies me much to find you taking such correct views of these subjects, but as it is now getting late I must be winding my way homewards, and so Mr. Hayte, I will wish you good evening.

Par.—Good evening, sir, and many thanks for the information you have given me.

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